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Editorial

All lies

Gloria Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (SONA) was a pack of lies, and was no different from all her previous SONA.

All she did was rummage through already corrupted government economic data and select the smallest details that would show ostensible achievements by her regime. She blamed everyone else for all the failures.

She covered up the failure of her economic management and policies by citing so-called development statistics. She used her manufactured data to obscure the fact that the Philippine economy is being shored up only by the dollar remittances of millions of Filipino workers who have been forced to take their chances overseas because of massive unemployment in the Philippines caused by her economic policies.

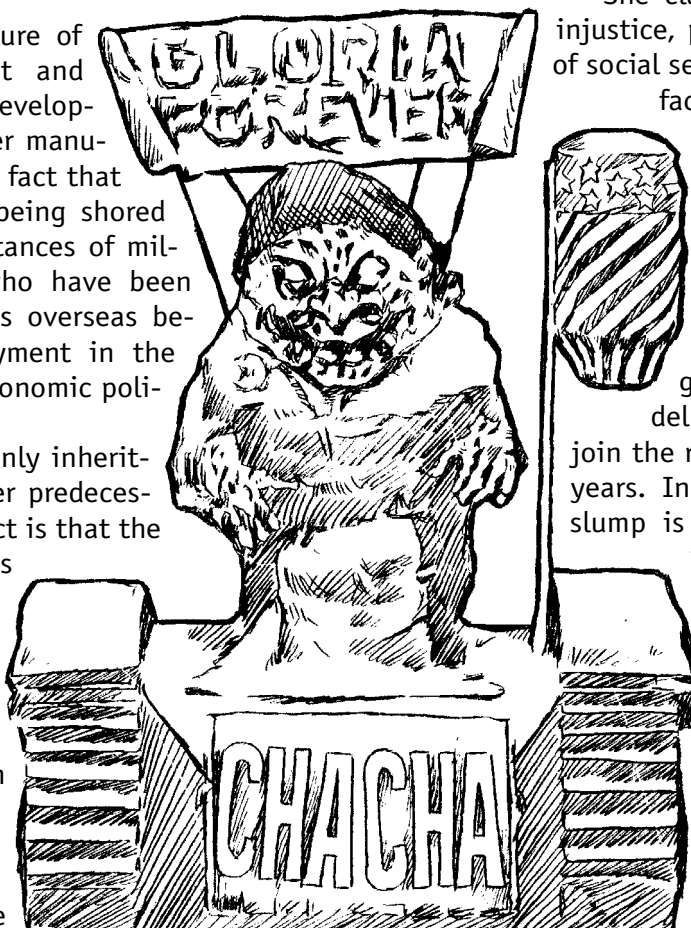
Arroyo claims that she only inherited the poisoned fruits of her predecessors' bad governance. The fact is that the economy and the people's quality of life took a nose-dive under her regime.

She hides the real socio-economic conditions under her rule: the decline of manufacturing, the drop in agricultural production, the severe unemployment, the ballooning deficit, the upwardly spiralling debt, the

shrinking value of the peso, the worsening impoverishment of the majority of Filipinos and the growing gap between the rich and the poor. She has not taken responsibility for the suffering she has inflicted on the people due to her subservience to imperialist "globalization" policy that has perpetuated the backwardness of the local economy and further caused the destruction of industry, agriculture and the country's productive forces. She mentioned nothing about how her clique's insatiable thievery of billions of pesos from the nation's coffers has further condemned the people to poverty.

She claimed to have solved social injustice, poverty, hunger and the lack of social services when all these have in fact worsened under her nine-year administration. She had the gall to boast that thanks to her competence, the Philippines has been shielded from the economic and financial crisis that is now ravaging the entire globe. She persists in the delusion that the country will join the ranks of the First World in 20 years. In fact, the current economic slump is comparable to that of the 1983-86 period, before the overthrow of the Marcos fascist dictatorship.

Various international agencies have likewise given the Arroyo regime failing marks in the areas of governance, economic management, poverty alleviation, education, social services, corruption, criminality



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4 soldiers dead, 7 injured in encounters with NPA

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and human rights, among others.

Arroyo's most glaring omission in her SONA are the extrajudicial killings, abductions and forced disappearance of activists, other critics and hardhitting media personnel targeting her regime. This, despite the fact that even the United Nations Human Rights Commission and other international agencies have attested to the country's dismal human rights situation. Human rights violations under the Arroyo regime are turning out to be worse compared to those under the Marcos fascist dictatorship.

Amid the thundering clamor for an end to her rule, Arroyo has not categorically stated that she would step down after she finishes her term. Instead, she and her sons and minions have been underhandedly drawing up plans to pursue cha-cha, con-ass and oth-

er schemes to extend her rule beyond 2010. She denies any intentions of declaring martial law despite disclosures that she had in the past tried many times to do so in the guise of wielding emergency powers and issuing Marcos-style fascist decrees and general orders in February 2006. She nonetheless warns that she will employ the fascist powers of the state to the hilt should protest actions gain strength and threaten her continued rule.

The people must therefore be ever vigilant of any move on the part of Arroyo to remain in power and avoid being held accountable by the people. The people must step up their efforts and raise their level of determination to thwart any attempt by the regime to perpetuate itself in power and continue oppressing the people. **AB**

The truth concealed

The chronic crisis of the Philippines' neocolonial and semi-feudal economy has worsened due to the US-Arroyo regime's greed and its implementation of the imperialist policy of "globalization" in its nine-year rule. The economy is now being bludgeoned even more by the raging crisis of the international capitalist system. This is what Gloria Arroyo purposely omitted from her SONA. Following are some of the data

that she deliberately withheld:

► The country's gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 2.3% in the first quarter of this year.

► Industrial production also suffered a 6.6% slump in the first quarter of 2009—the biggest in 20 years. The manufacturing sector continues to shrink, from its peak of 29.1% in 1973 to only 20.2% in 2008.


► Agriculture's share in the GDP is now at its smallest at 16%.

► Unemployment rose to its highest levels under the Arroyo regime. Even based on government statistics alone, the number of unemployed and underemployed grew from 8.5 million to 11 million from January 2001 to April 2009.

Among those classified as employed, there is a growing number who are actually only employed part-time. The number of part-time workers grew from 8.3 million in 2001 to 14.3 million in 2009. They now comprise 41% of those classified as employed in 2009. There were supposedly 1.5 million new jobs in 2008, but 87% of them were occupations that provided no or minimal income, among them unpaid family work or "self-employment."

► The biggest number of Filipinos went abroad to find work between 2001 and 2008. Currently, more than one million persons leave the country annually to seek employment compared to 469,709 under Aquino, 713,505 under Ramos and 839,324 under Estrada.

► The amount that should be added to the minimum daily wage for a family of six to live decently has doubled under Arroyo's administration. In Metro Manila, where the minimum daily wage is ₱382,

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the amount has grown from P252 in 2001 to P535 in 2008 because a worker's family now needs P917 a day to live decently.

► Based on the latest figures from the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), the Filipino family's average income fell by P20,400 from 2000 to 2006. The number of impoverished Filipinos also grew from 25.1 million to 27.6 million in the same period.

On the other hand, a Social Weather Stations survey revealed that the 50% poverty incidence under Arroyo's rule is the highest in the country's history. The same survey also revealed that hunger incidence has quadrupled in the last six years.

Gross personal and household consumption also declined for the first time in 15 years, falling by 3.1% in the first quarter of 2009.

► The number of school-age children who are unable to go to school grew by 2.45 million from 2000 to 2008. The problem has been compounded by unbridled hikes in school fees. In Metro Manila, matriculation fees grew by a whopping 94.54% in the last nine years (from an average of P439.59 per unit to P855.20 per unit).

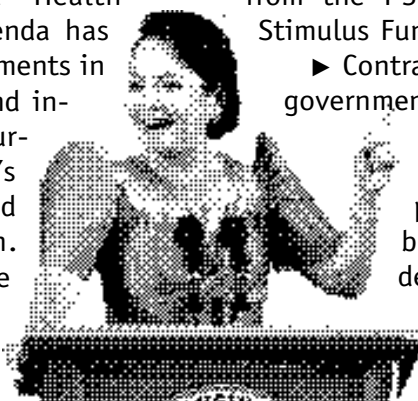
► There is only one doctor for every 25,000 patients—a far cry from the current international standard of one doctor for every 600 patients. Aside from the fact that the regime has been depressing the wages and benefits of health workers, it has been encouraging doctors and nurses to go abroad.

The so-called Health Sector Reform Agenda has not led to improvements in public hospitals and instead, has encouraged the latter's privatization and commercialization. Health care's share in the national budget has also progressively decreased.

► The US-Arroyo regime's nine-year rule has been marked by large-scale anomalies involving the ruling family and its cohorts. The most notorious are the \$14 million kickback from IMPSA-Argentina for the rehabilitation of a power plant right after Arroyo took power; the P1.4 billion milked from the PEACE Bonds; the P600 million overprice in the President Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard project; the \$200

million padded to the Northrail Project budget; the P2.8 billion fleeced from the Ginintuang Masaganang Ani Project; the P4 billion missing from the Road Users' Tax; the \$41 million advance given to Arroyo and the overall \$300 million kickback demanded from the NBN-ZTE Broadband Project; and the huge portion missing from the P300 billion "Economic Stimulus Fund."

► Contrary to Arroyo's claims, government debt has risen by P256.8 billion annually since she took power. She has doubled the P2.17 trillion debt she inherited from the Estrada regime, making it grow to P4.8 trillion. She has allotted the biggest amounts to debt service in the country's history. Since 2001, she has spent P4.8 trillion on debt service, 350% bigger than the amount allotted by the Aquino, Ramos and Estrada regimes combined in the last 15 years. This year, the government spends only P6 for education, P1 for health and P0.12 for housing per capita, but steals P21 for debt service from every Filipino. **AB**



Arroyo's SONA is worthless

"The Filipino people do not expect anything from Gloria Arroyo's upcoming SONA," said NDF-Mindanao spokesperson Jorge "Ka Oris" Madlos, in a statement issued on July 27.

Ka Oris assailed the puppet, corrupt and brutal regime while hailing the people for their continued struggle. He said that all the people want to hear is Arroyo's farewell. But even this, she refuses to grant. As expected, the only thing to come out of Arroyo's mouth are her schemes and policies that will perpetuate herself in power. She stands ready to do everything, even to declare martial law, said Ka Oris.

Ka Oris called for the intensification of revolutionary struggle in Mindanao and the rest of the country

against the state's minions to contribute to the overall efforts to oust Arroyo.

NDF-Southern Mindanao also scored Arroyo's SONA, calling it a shameless attempt to conceal the real state of the nation. At the same time, it congratulated the tens of thousands of people who rallied against the regime in Davao City. It belied Arroyo's arrogant claims of a "strong economy" and a "strong presidency," saying these actually referred to her bloody rule and her attempts to hoodwink and cause the capitulation of both the NDFP and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) through the peace talks.

Meanwhile, the NPA Antonio Nerio Antao Command (ANAC) of Front 15 in Southern Mindanao issued

a special statement to assail Arroyo's presentation of a surrenderee who was allegedly a member of the guerrilla front committee. Arroyo presented the surrenderee during her SONA to project her bogus economic and amnesty programs.

The ANAC declared that its revolutionary standpoint was not for sale. It added that revolutionaries will never be convinced to surrender their commitment and determination to struggle just because of the worthless illusion Arroyo has created in hailing a certain "Lea" who has betrayed the revolution and the people by allowing Arroyo to use her in spewing lies that the regime has been alleviating the country's poverty.

NDFP-Northern Mindanao spokesperson Ka Maria Malaya likewise issued a statement denouncing Arroyo's lies regarding her declaration of a suspension of offensive military operations against the MILF and NDFP. She said Arroyo's declaration was only meant to improve her image and was patently false. Thousands of people have been forced to flee their homes due to aerial bombings and ground attacks against Lumad and Moro communities. The NDFP-NEMR conveyed its sympathies to the people who have suffered due to the AFP's operations. The regime's terrorist attacks on the people are part of Oplan Bantay Laya 2 that the regime has been enforcing and the revolutionary movement has been resisting. **AB**

Militants launch barrage of protests against Arroyo's latest SONA

Thousands of people took to the streets to assail Gloria Arroyo's latest State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 27.

Up to 15,000 participated in protests along Commonwealth Ave. in Quezon City led by the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (BAYAN), Kilusang Mayo Uno, Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, GABRIELA and other progressive organizations. The protest was dubbed "A blow against Arroyo's con-ass nationwide". Also joining the protest action were activists from Southern Tagalog (ST) led by BAYAN-ST and Pagkakaisa ng Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan (PAMANTIK) who began their march to Quezon City on July 22.

Aside from the ongoing struggle against the con-ass that the regime is brewing, the rallyists also criticized the regime's failed economic programs and social services in the past nine years. According to BAYAN

secretary-general Renato Reyes, "Arroyo will be remembered as the president who caused price increases because of the Expanded Value Added Tax imposed on oil and electricity. She will also be remembered as the president who spent so much on foreign debt service in the face of substandard social services for our people."

Meanwhile, progressive party representatives Satur Ocampo, Teddy Casiño and Neri Colmenares of Bayan Muna; Liza Maza and Luzviminda Ilagan of Gabriela Women's Party; Rafael Mariano and Joel Maglunsod of Anakpawis; and Ray-

mond Palatino of Kabataan Party walked out of Congress. According to the progressive congresspersons, Arroyo will not be mentioning the genuine state of the nation, anyway. The people are suffering from poverty, hunger, and injustice under her administration but her speech before Congress will be nothing but lies, they said. They also added that Arroyo should clarify what her real plans are after 2010 and that she should not hide her plans to stay in power behind charter change.

Protest actions were also launched in other parts of Luzon, in the Visayas, Mindanao and overseas.

In Luzon, the Cordillera People's Alliance led a rally at the People's Park in Baguio. A protest action was also launched in La Union. Aside from assailing Arroyo's SONA, they also lambasted large-scale mining in the Ilocos-Cordillera region. The



United Action Kontra Chacha also organized a protest action in Santiago City in Isabela.

An effigy was also paraded by rallyists in Legazpi City in Albay. The protestors also stopped in front of Camp Gen. Simeon Ola in Legazpi along the way. At Ateneo de Naga, hundreds of students walked out of their classes to join a prayer rally at the Plaza Quezon. They gave Arroyo a failing grade for her unfulfilled promises at her ninth SONA. An estimated 17, 00 people joined the various protest actions in the Bicol provinces.

The Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon also said that the problems of the peasants are worsening in the countryside because of the antipeasant policies imposed by the regime. A forum against con-ass and cha-cha was also launched at the Holy Family Academy Auditorium in Angeles City led by BAYAN-Central Luzon. Pampanga governor Fr. Ed Panlilio attended the event. Rallies were also held in Aurora, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Bulacan, Bataan and Zambales.

In the Visayas, up to 12,000 people participated in a mass action led by the Catholic church in Bacolod City. Workers, farm workers, peasants, students and teachers and progressive groups gathered at the Bacolod City Public Plaza. They read an open letter expressing their opposition to cha-cha.

Meanwhile, BAYAN-Panay started a protest caravan around the island on July 26. Peasants, students and other sectors marched from Miag-ao, Iloilo while in the central part of the province, they congregated in Janiuay joined by the Tumanduk. Their numbers reached 1,500 once they arrived in Iloilo City. They pelted mud on a billboard of Arroyo that was on General Luna Street. In Capiz, 1,000 people camped out at the Band

Stand and launched a cultural rally titled "Lakbayan sang Pumuluyo" led by BAYAN and Katilingban sang Magagmay nga Mangingisda. In Kalibo, Aklan, 500 people participated in the State of the People's Address.

In Tagbilaran City in Bohol, members of the Boholanos Against con-ass (Bacona) protested at the public park which they started two weeks before the SONA. The Nagkahiusang Draybers sa Sugbo (NADSU) launched a transport strike in Cebu City on the day of Arroyo's SONA, paralyzing 80% of transportation in the city. After this, they converged with BAYAN-Central Visayas in a protest at the Gaisano Metro Colon where up to 1,000 people participated. A caravan was launched in Eastern Visayas where 3,000 gathered on the day of the SONA in Tacloban City.

In Mindanao, Bukidnon Rep. Teofisto Guingona III and Joel Virador joined a protest action in front of the Davao City Hall. They marched throughout the city and burned an effigy in the middle of Arroyo's speech in Manila. According to the Union of People's Lawyers in Mindanao, it was during Arroyo's term that the country's debt rose to gargantuan proportions, contrary to her claims that migrant workers' remittances have reduced it. In Cagayan de Oro City, BAYAN-Northeast Mindanao delivered a State of the People's Address as a counterpoint to the lies in the regime's SONA. They also lambasted the regime's brutal treatment of the region's urban poor aside from the relentless demolitions of the wet markets in Agora and Cogon and in the Lapasan community. In Butuan and Tandag City, a motorcade and rally were launched and a torch parade was held in Dipolog City. BAYAN also led a rally in Iligan City.

In Hongkong, MIGRANTE and the United Filipinos in HK (UNIFIL) led a rally at the Philippine consulate in the city. They warned congressmen in favor of Arroyo's con-ass that they will not receive any support from the families of migrant workers. In New Zealand, members of Migrante-Aotereoa climbed the mountain of Ruapehu and launched a protest as a symbol of their opposition to changes to the Philippine constitution.

In the US, BAYAN-USA led mass actions in various locales. Filipino-Americans launched pickets in front of the Philippine embassy in Washington, DC. They also carried the issue of Melissa Roxas and said that Arroyo had a hand in the abductions and other violations of human rights in the Philippines. In New York City, GABRIELA-USA launched the Real State of the Nation Address. One of their guest speakers was Sr. Mary John Mananzan of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP). In Los Angeles, they reenacted Melissa's abduction in the form of a street play and also called for the abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement. A silent protest was also launched by Anakbayan in New Jersey.

BAYAN-Canada held a People's SONA in Montreal as a protest to Arroyo's SONA. Their activity, which included forums and rallies lasted for several days. Protest actions were also held in Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver.

In Saudi Arabia, Migrante members held a press conference on July 27. Their call was "jobs, not con-ass" and "End GMA's oppression and deception of OFWs."

Migrante-Netherlands also condemned Arroyo's last SONA. They further stated that "many, many more are leaving the country because there are no jobs to be found in the Philippines." AB

Padding and shaving the list of National Artist awardees

Even artistic awards are not safe from Malacañang's meddling.

National Artists as well as other personalities, judges and cultural and artists' organizations, along with the Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP) and board members of the Cultural Center of the Philippines assailed Arroyo's addition of new National Artists that were not among those recommended by the jury. Out of the blue, Arroyo included as National Artists film director Carlo J. Caparas; her culture and arts adviser Cecile Guidote-Alvarez; fashion designer Pitoy Moreno; and architect Francisco Mañosa. The fact that Guidote-Alvarez recommended herself is particularly unethical and was the most vehemently criticized since she is the executive director of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, one of the jurors in the selection of National Artists. According to the jurors, Arroyo removed composer Ramon Santos from the list they prepared and replaced him with people she favored.

National Artist and NCCA member Bienvenido Lumbera said that the list shaving and list padding scandal in the selection of National Artists is shameful and a great insult. Despite the strong protest against her changes to the list, Arroyo remains recalcitrant on this issue.

The National Artists launched a march from the office of the CCP in Pasay City to the NCCA in Manila on August 7 to assail Gloria's interference.

AB

Arroyo's visit to the US

Confirming her puppetry

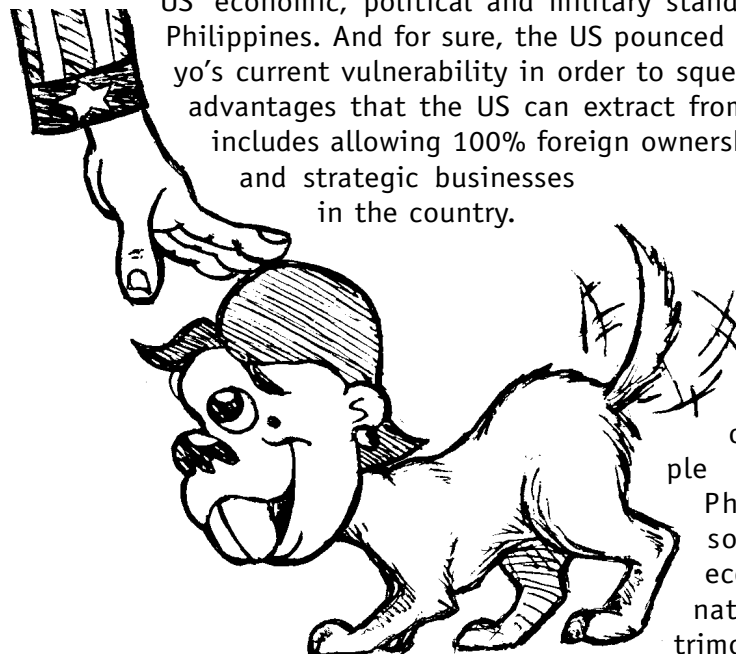
Gloria Arroyo's visit with US President Barack Obama on July 30 in Washington D.C. was the realization of Arroyo's longtime dream to speak or at least have a photo opportunity with the new head honcho of the US. This was her chance to obtain even a whiff of acquiescence from the US for her hugely abhorrent and isolated regime, and to confirm her status as the US's puppet-in-chief in the Philippines.

Just as expected, Arroyo's visit to the US only further emphasized her puppetry to the new master. Just like a loyal puppet, she obeyed his command to serve as "coordinator" between the US and other countries in Southeast and East Asia. It was the master's dictate that she serve as the rah-rah girl for the US' position, regardless of the stand of other countries in the region.

Obama's order also confirmed that the Philippines will continue to serve as the "second front" in the international "war against terrorism." This has also reinforced the permanent basing and direct and indirect participation of American troops in military operations in the country, and affirmed the one-sided and oppressive Visiting Forces Agreement.

Arroyo very obviously and shamefully ended up looking as the US' subservient vassal in the region. She swallowed all this in exchange for Obama's public silence regarding the accusations made on the puppet regime's brutality, corruption and deception of the Filipino people. Their discussions on confidential and more sensitive issues and collusions they kept to themselves.

Desperate to gain the master's blessings for the prolongation of Arroyo's rule, it is certain that the puppet president promised many more concessions that would further buttress the US' economic, political and military standing in the Philippines. And for sure, the US pounced upon Arroyo's current vulnerability in order to squeeze all the advantages that the US can extract from her. This includes allowing 100% foreign ownership of land and strategic businesses in the country.



This is all to the further detriment of the people and the Philippines' sovereignty, economy and national patrimony.

AB

NDFP pays its respects to Aquino

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) hailed former Pres. Corazon Aquino who passed away on August 1, saying that the late president was an inspiring and outstanding figure in the antifascist alliance against the Marcos dictatorship, especially after her husband, former Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr., was assassinated. She was openly critical of the longrunning support of the US for the Marcos dictatorship in exchange for the aggrandizement of US economic interests and the continuance of the US military bases.

The statement was signed by

Prof. Jose Ma. Sison, chief consultant of the NDFP; Luis Jalandoni and Fidel Agcaoili, chair and vice chair of the NDFP Negotiating Panel; and its members Juliet de Lima-Sison, Coni Ledesma and Asterio Palima. Other NDFP consultants Vicente Ladlad, Rafael Baylosis, Randall Echanis, Danilo Borjal and Elizabeth Principe and NDFP lead counsel Atty. Romeo Capulong also signed the statement.

The NDFP said that when Aquino became president, one of the first things she did was to order the release of the hundreds of political detainees including Pro-

fessor Sison. This was in fulfillment of her promise when she campaigned for the presidency. Jalandoni stated that Aquino's release of hundreds of political detainees was the most admirable thing she did. He said that her action was a fine example of the fulfillment of commitments and magnanimity. He also added that such qualities are not seen in Gloria Arroyo's administration.

Under Aquino's term in office, the peace talks were launched but ended after the military and police's indiscriminately fired at farmers who were demanding land reform on January 22, 1987 at Mendiola.

Aquino also supported the drafting of a new constitution to replace the constitution forced on the people under the dictatorship. Said the NDFP, although the 1987 constitution has provisions that were used against the implementation of genuine agrarian reform in the country, it also had provisions that supported human rights, made it difficult to impose martial law, maintained some restrictions against foreign investments and prohibited military bases, foreign troops and nuclear arms in the country.

Aquino also fought against the anti-democratic policies and moves of those who succeeded her, from Fidel Ramos to Joseph Estrada and Gloria Arroyo, and she united with the patriotic and progressive forces in protest actions. Even when she was seriously ill from cancer, Aquino strongly criticized Arroyo and her underlings' plans for a constituent assembly, calling it a shameful abuse of power.

Meanwhile, in an interview,

Unmaneuverable maneuvers

There is no end to Gloria Arroyo's schemes to extend her power beyond 2010. One of her latest contrivances is for her to lead a "transition government", and she even tried to woo her critics to support her scheme.

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales reportedly spoke with Bishop Antonio Tobias of Novaliches and Chief Justice Reynato Puno of the Supreme Court to ask their opinion on the matter and persuade them to support Arroyo's latest scheme. To entice the bishop and chief justice to support it, he even offered them positions in a "transition council". The council, which would be established to oversee charter change before the 2010 elections, would be led by Arroyo at the end of her term in July 2010 if cha-cha cannot be implemented right away. Once changes to the constitution that will pave the way for Arroyo's takeover as prime minister under a parliamentary system are under way, Arroyo will have ruled uninterruptedly.

This scheme, which even Gonzales admits is not allowed under the present constitution of the reactionary government, has met widespread opposition. Arroyo will therefore be resorting to military force to suppress any opposition.

It is the strong possibility of even more heightened military repression that prompted Avelino Cruz, Arroyo's former secretary of defense, to call on AFP elements to disobey illegal orders. Cruz, a former cabinet member, opposed Arroyo's plan in 2006 to impose martial law after declaring a state of emergency.

Arroyo's dirty and violent plans are now faltering after having been exposed early on and assailed.

AB

Continued on "NDFP..." on page 8

Hundreds of thousands lay Aquino to rest

Hundreds of thousands to a million people came to mourn when former Pres. Corazon Aquino was brought to her final resting place on August 5. The people were oblivious to the heavy downpour as they lined the streets where Aquino's remains would be brought by a funeral cortege from the Manila Cathedral to Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque City. This was the largest gathering of a united people since EDSA 2 in 2001.

The huge crowd was not just the result of a people condoling with the family of the late former president. Aside from paying their respects to Aquino, the people who took to the streets cried "Carry on the struggle!" Progressive organizations that joined the march and other simultaneous actions explained that the historic unity and struggle demonstrated in EDSA were relived not just to mourn Aquino's passing but because the people felt a need to band together to solve worsening poverty, injustice and the reign of greed.

They recognized Cory Aquino's important role as a symbol in the struggle against the dictatorship during the time of Marcos. Even though she was no longer in power, she continued to fight against electoral fraud, corruption, bankruptcy, violence and abuse of power. Even from her sickbed, she vehemently opposed the anomalies, the violation of the

people's civil rights and the cha-cha scheme. She persistently called for Arroyo's resignation and the continuance of the people's struggle against the greed for wealth and power of one who wishes to surpass Marcos.



It is undeniable that the people's widespread expression of mourning and show of support when Aquino died was a huge slap in the face of the Arroyo regime because of the former president's notable role in the anti-Arroyo alliance. The Arroyo clique's insulting withdrawal of Aquino's bodyguards after her statement criticizing the administration was read at a huge rally in June backfired. Arroyo hastened to recoup by offering a state funeral for Aquino, but the family refused. They also did not give Arroyo any role whatsoever in the wake and burial.

Even so, to keep up with appearances, Arroyo still attended the wake in the early morning hours of August 5. She intention-

ally delayed her departure from the US and timed her return to the Philippines for the early morning so that she would come across as few people as possible at the wake. The mourners were visibly agitated when she arrived, especially since many of them were very angry. They gave Arroyo and her entourage dagger looks. Arroyo stayed inside the Manila Cathedral for only seven minutes due to her profound fear of the mourners.

Arroyo is now apprehensive because the large throng that joined the funeral march for Aquino shows that the people have the ability to launch a widespread uprising if the regime dares to railroad cha-cha to stay in power.

To dissemble the political significance and threat posed to the regime by the huge size of the crowd that poured out into the streets and expressed their true sentiments, Malacañang ordered the PNP to downgrade its reports of the number of people who joined the march or waited patiently for the cortege to arrive.

With Arroyo's avarice for power practically no different from that of the dictator Marcos, a repeat of the series of events from 1983 to 1986 looms ahead. That up to a million trooped to the wake, took to the streets and attended Cory Aquino's burial shows that they still possess the same fortitude and capability. AB

"NDFP...", from page 7

Professor Sison and his wife Juliet de Lima said they and the Aquino couple became close because of their struggle against the Marcos dictatorship. Sison said that for almost two years, Aquino resisted the military's moves to cancel his passport. When

Aquino could no longer prevent this because of the serious threats that the military posed for her regime, she sent word to Sison that it would be safer if he just lived outside the country. Even though Sison had to publicly criticize Aquino for this, they remained in good terms. AB

Melissa Roxas' fighting stance against the regime

Melissa Roxas, member of BAYAN-USA and the cultural group Habi Arts in Los Angeles, California, returned to the country on July 20 to face head on those who abducted and tortured her and her two companions and pursue the cases she has filed against them. She attended a Court of Appeals hearing on her petition for a writ of amparo. She also testified before the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the Committee on Human Rights of the House of Representatives regarding her abduction and torture.



The regime has attempted to discredit the Filipino-American activist using the notorious butcher Jovito Palparan and anti-communist vigilante leader Pastor Alcover Jr.

Palparan and Alcover allege that it was the NPA that abducted Roxas because she wanted to leave the revolutionary movement. Even the AFP to brass and spokesperson joined the bandwagon. They wove a tall tale and presented video footage and photographs to back up their allegations.

Palparan and Alcover even went as far as to insinuate that Roxas' abduction and torture were justified because she is a member of the communist movement. According to the laughable script of these two lunatics, Roxas merely wants to tarnish the image of Gloria Arroyo's regime.

Roxas, however, consistently and firmly denies these accusations.

Palparan and Alcover are singing the same tune sung by Malacañang and the AFP when news first broke on Roxas' abduction and torture—that what happened to her was “fabricated” and “stage-managed”. These actions only further highlight the Arroyo regime's long time practice of

washing its hands of the abduction, torture and death of numerous activists, heaping the blame on the victims themselves and hurling accusations at the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA.

Atty. Leila de Lima, CHR chair, stated, however, that even if that truly is Roxas in the video, the main issue is her abduction and torture and not her political affil-

iations.

Despite the Arroyo regime's attempts to discredit and silence her, Roxas remains steadfast in her decision to tell the truth and seek justice for herself and other victims of human rights violations.

Roxas also filed cases against Gloria Arroyo before the US State Department and the office of Prof. Manfred Nowak, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture. **AB**

Elizabeth Principe freed

After almost 18 months behind bars as a political detainee, Elizabeth Principe, a consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, was freed after the Regional Trial Court in Nueva Vizcaya dismissed the last case against her. All of her other cases had already been dismissed prior to this.

Principe was released on July 21 at 4:25 p.m. from the PNP Custodial Center in Camp Crame. Earlier that same day, she began a hunger strike along with Randall Echanis, Eduardo Serrano, Eduardo Sarmiento, Prospero Agudo and other political detainees. Simultaneously, their supporters launched a picket.

The AFP moved to stop the release of Principe, but was forced to step aside because of intense pressure from the protestors outside and the court order. Once outside, she was met by her daughter Lorena Santos, Gabriela Women's Party Rep. Liza Maza and progressive groups.

Principe said she owes a debt of gratitude to the Filipino people for her freedom, not to the Arroyo regime. She intends to rejoin the Filipino people's struggle to oust Arroyo. She also demanded the release of other political detainees still incarcerated. **AB**



Mindanao evacuees suffering

More or less than 250,000 Moro people are jampacked into evacuation centers in Central Mindanao. The vast majority of these evacuees are staying in Maguindanao and North Cotabato.

They were forced to stay in those areas because they are unable to return safely to their homes due to the ongoing fighting between forces of the government and the MILF in 109 villages of Maguindanao and North Cotabato.

This was the situation presented at the "State of Bakwit Address" (SOBA) which was read at a forum launched on July 23 at the Notre Dame University Gym in Cotabato City. The forum was attended by professionals, students, representatives of people's organizations and evacuees.

Since the fighting broke out in August 2008, as many as 157,584 families or 756,544 individuals have fled their villages in North Cotabato, Maguindanao and Lanao del Norte, according to the National Disaster Coordinating Council.

This is the largest number of evacuees worldwide in 2008.

Even within the evacuation centers, the suffering of the evacuees continues. A two month old baby reportedly died due to malnutrition on June 20. A 6-year old child was seriously wounded when the military mercilessly rained mortar shells on an evacuation center in Barangay Libutan, Mamasapano, Maguindanao on June 15.

On May 7, three evacuees from Datu Piang named Law Mahmud, 32; Kaharudin Tasil, 26;

and Harudin Melen, 28 were suddenly abducted when they went to the nearby town of Datu Saudi Ampatuan to fetch a supply of food from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

for their evacuation center. This is because the military blocked the ICRC convoy. Law's dead body was found floating in the Pulangi River on the morning of May 12. Kaharudin and Harudin have not yet been found.

The military has also victimized many of the victims twice over by burning their homes and destroying their properties and farmlands. **AB**

NDFP consultant arrested

Just days after the Arroyo regime reinstated the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), military and police elements arrested National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) consultant Alfredo Mapano at around 2 a.m. on August 1 in Cagayan de Oro City. Mapano, who is accused of being the secretary of the North Central Mindanao Region, was charged with eight trumped-up criminal cases.

According to reports, Mapano was visiting his wife and children and was on his way to consultations with other leaders and members of the NDFP Negotiating Panel regarding the upcoming formal peace talks when he was arrested.

In a statement, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) resoundingly criticized Mapano's illegal arrest. It said that the Arroyo government, military and police should respect their own promises and immediately release Mapano. His arrest is a slap in the face of the peace process and his continued detention is a mockery of the resumption of formal peace talks, added the CPP. **AB**

Pedicab driver slain

A soldier shot and killed a pedicab driver in Aglipay, Quirino on July 27. The assailant was identified as PFC Ariel Ayahao, an element of the Military Intelligence Group (MIG) of the Philippine Army. The victim was Albert Domingo.

Witnesses said the MIG element came from a town fiesta and was driving his motorcycle. It happened that the pedicab of the victim was blocking the road just outside the Aglipay municipal hall. The two traded heated words and suddenly the soldier pulled out his .45 caliber pistol and fatally shot the driver in the neck. **AB**



Ethnic turmoil in China

As of July 15, up to 192 people had already been killed in nearly a month of ethnic turmoil in Urumqi City in the province of Xinjiang, China, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency. More than 1,600 have also been wounded and 74 of them are in critical condition.

More than 700 were arrested and imprisoned, according to Xinhua. Local residents said that the police has been conducting indiscriminate searches in the communities of the Uighur, a national minority that comprises the majority of the population in the province. The residents were also angered by the government's closure of mosques in the city on July 10, Friday, the day of prayer for the Muslim Uighur.

The 20,000 police and soldiers deployed in the area were unable to stop the spread of unrest throughout the region where long-standing ethnic strife at times led to violence.

The present turmoil was the result of a quarrel between Uighur and Han workers (the majority ethnic group in China) in the province of Guangdong, 3,200 kilometers from Xinjiang. The death of two Uighur in the incident stoked the already seething anger throughout Uighur communities.

From a small gathering on July 5 to mourn those killed, the protest quickly spread throughout the city. Several incidents of violence flared up between the Uighur and Han. The Chinese government immediately deployed soldiers and police to suppress the turmoil which it blamed on groups "trained by foreign terrorist members of the al Qaeda."

Xinjiang was declared an autonomous province with the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, the more than 200 years of discrimination against the Uighur was resolved and the province was able to attain significant development.

But in the past 20-30 years, the province has once again been embroiled in ethnic strife because of the influx of Han who have migrated to the province and were more favored for employment because of their advantage in terms of technical skills and fluency in the Chinese language. Under the current revisionist leadership, the



harmony between the Han and Uighur that was established by the past proletarian state has been destroyed. AB

Striking workers win in South Africa

Workers in South Africa who staged a massive strike in July won wage increases.

As many as 150,000 workers joined the strike that lasted several weeks and stopped operations in municipalities, buses and trains in various areas. The local police also joined the strike.

Prior to this, workers constructing the stadium for the 2010 FIFA World Cup went on strike in the first week of July. Up to 70,000 workers forged ranks and demanded a wage increase.

Meanwhile, police dispersed strikers in Thokoze, Ekurhuleni and in the province of Limpopo using rubber bullets. More than 200 demonstrators were also arrested in the province of Mpumalanga. The residents of various communities mainly demanded decent housing, electricity and water services.

South African President Jacob Zuma was forced to sign an order granting a 13% wage increase to municipal workers. Oil industry workers also agreed to a 9.5% wage increase. AB



4 soldiers dead, 7 injured in encounters with NPA

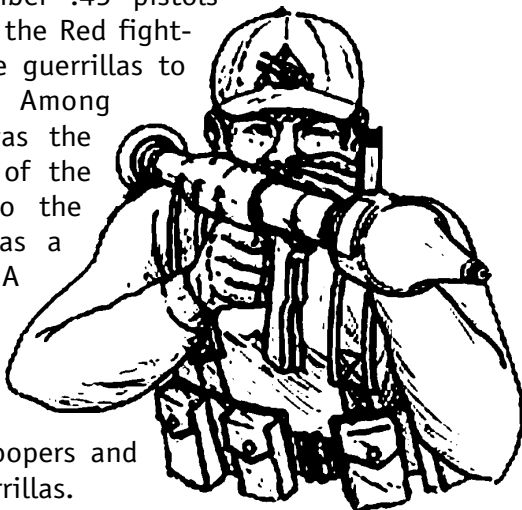
Four soldiers were killed and seven were wounded in two separate tactical offensives launched by Red fighters of the New People's Army (NPA) in the last week of July.

In Sitio Narra, Barangay Lumiad, Paquibato District, Davao City, two soldiers were killed and five others wounded when guerrillas of the NPA Pulang Bagani Command 1 ambushed troops from the 5th Scout Ranger Company-Philippine Army aboard a vehicle on July 27.

Prior to this, two elements of the 23rd IB were wounded when Red fighters of Front 4A of the North Central Mindanao Region attacked the battalion's detachment in Barangay Balongagan, Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte on July 25. The raid lasted ten minutes.

Meanwhile, the NPA Alejandro Lanaja Command (ALC) belied the AFP's claims that two soldiers of the 3rd Special Forces Battalion (SFB) died in an ambush in Sitio Moria, Barangay Banlag, Monkayo, Compostela Valley on July 23. The AFP further claimed that the soldiers were unarmed and that they were there for a "development project".

According to the ALC, the 3rd SFB was in the middle of an intense military operation at the time. The two soldiers who were aboard a motorcycle driven by a civilian were nearing an NPA checkpoint. The troops drew their caliber .45 pistols and fired upon the Red fighters, forcing the guerrillas to return fire. Among those killed was the civilian driver of the motorcycle who the soldiers used as a human shield. A grenade carried by the soldiers exploded and shrapnel hit the two troopers and one of the guerrillas.



Arroyo blocks reduction of the cost of medicine

PROGRESSIVE organizations and the opposition staunchly lambasted Arroyo's much-vaunted executive order to reduce the cost of medicine. Gloria Arroyo boasted during her State of the Nation Address (SONA) that she signed Executive Order 821 or the Maximum Retail Price for medicines in order to reduce by 50% the prices of five out of 21 essential medicines identified by the Department of Health. This was after multinational pharmaceutical companies ostensibly agreed to voluntarily lower by 30% the price of the 16 other medicines and only left five to be encompassed by Arroyo's order.

However, Arroyo's order is worthless and the pharmaceutical companies' voluntary price reduction nominal because first of all, the government lacks mechanisms to ensure that medicine prices will be decreased. Second, the medicines concerned comprise only a fraction of the 1,600 medicines on the market whose prices are still ridiculously high. This is merely a tiny nick off medicine prices in the country which are 10% to 84% higher compared to other countries that have their own pharmaceutical industries and control over the price of their medicines.

According to the Health Alliance for Democracy (HEAD), it is the pharmaceutical companies that have been impeding the reduction of the cost of medicine. HEAD said that each and every law and executive order issued in the last two decades or so to reduce medicine prices has been blocked by these companies. HEAD cited as an example the Generics Law of 1998 which the multinational companies only toyed with by manufacturing substandard generic medicines to force consumers to purchase the more expensive branded medicines. HEAD also added that there are no regulations on the cost of medicines manufactured by multinational companies and that they collude with the government to conceal their excess profits, just as what they are doing now under the Arroyo administration.